

SUDAN

ISSUE

Sudan: The humanitarian crises in Southern Sudan and the western Darfur region of Sudan.

BACKGROUND

The modern political history of Sudan begins in 1956 when the nation was granted independence from the British government, but the roots of Sudan's current instabilities pre-date independence. Sudan is an extraordinarily diverse country, encompassing a northern half that is predominantly Arab, and a southern half that is predominantly African. Because of the vast cultural differences between the people of the two regions, the British government in practice administered the nation as two separate colonies. The political unity of north and south that came with independence thus brought many political, economic, and cultural challenges.

For most of the past 51 years, civil war has existed between the Sudanese government in the northern city of Khartoum and the people of southern Sudan. The most recent north-south civil war was formally ended with a 2005 peace agreement, though that agreement's hold is fragile.

Currently, international attention is focused on crisis in the western region of Darfur, where the government has sponsored a program of genocide carried out by Arab militias against the predominantly African people of the region.

Bringing peace and lasting security to Sudan requires examining the country as a whole, exploring the root causes of, and the relationships between, various conflicts

The Crisis in Southern Sudan:

The origins of Sudan's most recent north-south civil war are rooted in – but also are deeper than -- the ethnic and religious differences between the predominantly Arab, Islamic north and the predominantly Christian and animist African south. Even more fundamentally, the conflict was rooted in access to resources and the distribution of political power between the two regions.

Beginning in the years leading up to the British withdrawal from Sudan, the bulk of wealth and power became concentrated in Khartoum, Sudan's capital in the north. Southerners rebelled in 1955. After 17 years of fighting, a weakened Khartoum government signed the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement in March 1972, but it failed to address many of the root causes of the conflict. Almost immediately, the government began working to monopolize and maximize profits from oil discovered in the 1970's in southern Sudan. By 1983, increased tensions led southern members of the Sudanese army to escape to Ethiopia where they created the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) led by John Garang.

On June 5, 1983 the government annulled the Addis Ababa agreement, Arabic became the official language, Sudan became an Islamist State, and Sha'ria Law was instituted throughout the nation. The result was a second civil war in which the SPLA led southern opposition to the northern government. In June 1989 a military coup by the National Islamist Front placed Hassan Omar al-Bashir in power, where he remains today. Rather than seeking to bring the civil war to a close, Bashir deliberately created tension among ethnic groups in the south, particularly against the Dinka tribe. John Garang was a Dinka and they were the backbone of the SPLA. Bashir would later use the same techniques in Darfur as well.

The government's tactics during the war were brutal and included supporting rebel, militia, and terrorist groups from neighboring countries, such as the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda, whose pattern of violent upheaval soon spread to southern Sudan. Between 1986 and 2002 it is estimated that the northern

government abducted some 12,000 southerners to be used as slaves. The Muraheleen (Arab horsemen, similar to the Janjaweed militias now in Darfur) stormed across the land killing and torturing southerners. The Dinka and others in the South fled the violence in their homeland, pouring into refugee and displacement camps. During the 22 year war two-and-a-half million people were killed.

Peace Agreement

In January 2005 after 22 years of civil war, the Khartoum government and the SPLA (by now sometimes referred to as the SPLM: Southern People's Liberation *Movement*) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This came after significant international pressure, especially from the United States. In September 2001 President Bush sent former Senator and Episcopal priest John Danforth to Sudan as the special U.S. Envoy for Peace. Danforth played a critical role in the peace process and the signing of the CPA in Kenya. The CPA stipulated that, for a period of six years, the south would be entitled to elect its own government based in the southern capital of Juba, and its officials would have an official role in the northern government. Sha'ria law would not be imposed in the south. Following the signing of the CPA, SPLM/A leader John Garang was sworn in as President of Southern Sudan and Vice President of Sudan. While revenues from oil and other natural resources in the south would be split equally between the north and south, those from northern resources stayed exclusively in the north. In 2011, the southern Sudanese will vote on whether to stay one country or secede and form a separate country.

While the CPA was a major advance in the road to peace, it bore several shortcomings and has faced several setbacks over the past two years. Garang, a national hero and symbol of unity died in a helicopter accident in July 2005. Salva Kiir, Garang's deputy, was sworn in as his replacement. Even more significantly, the government of the north has failed to implement several key sections of the CPA, including:

- a ceasefire in Darfur
- the withdrawal of northern military units from the south, and
- the recognition of borders between the north and the south.

Additionally, because the CPA's requirements for transparency in the sharing of oil revenues are weak, many southerners and outside observers believe that the north has not shared revenues equally. Oil revenues are critical to the existence of the Southern government. There will be important mid-term elections in 2009, including voting for the president. These are likely to have a profound impact on the CPA and the country as a whole. Additional hurdles to peace include the estimated six million refugees and displaced people who now want to or are returning to the south where there are few resources or institutions to support them.

The Episcopal Church of Sudan

The Episcopal Church of Sudan is one of the largest Christian denominations in the South. It claims more than four million members throughout 24 dioceses, including four in the north that are composed of mostly displaced southern Sudanese. The civil war left the south in shambles and the Episcopal Church in Sudan is playing a key role in the rebuilding efforts. They have been assisted through partnerships with U.S. dioceses including the Diocese of Renk with Chicago, the Diocese of Lui with Missouri, and the Diocese of Bor with Indianapolis. The Diocese of Virginia has played a strong role in aiding the entire Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and has a special relationship with Renk.

The Crisis in Darfur

Since 2003, the conflict in Darfur -- a region in western Sudan about the size of Texas -- has claimed the lives of at least 150,000 people and forced 2.3 million to leave their homes. Displaced people are in camps in Sudan and Chad, and it is estimated that one million people still live in villages under constant threat of violence.

Competition for land and access to water, as well as the Khartoum government's failure to address worsening poverty in the Darfur region, are among the roots of the current conflict. After a period of drought, famine and neglect, violence erupted in 1987 and again in 1996 between the Fur (a prominent Darfuri tribe) and Arab militia groups known as Janjaweed.

In 2003, when the negotiations between the SPLA and the Khartoum government began, the Africans native to Darfur pressed for additional steps that would address inequities faced by Darfur that were not within the scope of the CPA negotiations. Frustrated by the Khartoum government's lack of engagement, they organized the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and began launching attacks against government outposts. The government saw the SLA as a credible threat to power and responded to the rebel attacks with a scorched-earth counterinsurgency campaign executed by the Janjaweed (literally, "devils on horseback.")

The Janjaweed response to the SLA has included systematic murder of civilians, and the use of rape as a weapon. Typically attacks begin before dawn with aircraft assaults. Fighters then enter the village to murder, burn, rape and loot, forcing survivors into the desert. To prevent people from returning to their villages, the Janjaweed poison water supplies and destroy crops. With millions fleeing their homes, refugee camps are overcrowded and lack adequate food, water, sanitation, basic healthcare, security and education.

Darfur Peace Agreement

On May 5, 2006 the Sudanese government and the SLA signed the Darfur Peace Agreement. While ostensibly designed to bring an end to the fighting, the lack of unity among the expanded number of rebel groups has weakened the agreement, and since it's signing the violence has escalated. In the first two months of 2007, according to the UN, over 80,000 more people entered Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps. Rebel groups have begun fighting amongst each other and hurting innocent civilians. Lacking sufficient manpower and funds, the peacekeeping efforts of a 7,400 troop force placed in Darfur by the African Union (AU) been ineffective

International and United States Responses

Criticism of the international response to Darfur has been widespread among humanitarian groups, faith communities, and peace and human-rights advocates. While the United Nations has passed 16 resolutions intended to stop the violence in Darfur, its effectiveness has been hampered by the intransigence of the Sudanese government and the unwillingness of other countries to take decisive action. In July 2007 the Sudanese government and the UN agreed to a new peacekeeping proposal allowing more than 20,000 troops of joint UN and AU forces. Sudan's foreign minister Lam Akol said "the government of Sudan accepted the hybrid option without conditionality." Peace advocates are monitoring Sudanese compliance closely, however, as the government of Sudan has backed away from past promises to support international-peacekeeping operations.

The United States' response has varied between active engagement and what critics have described as passivity. On one hand, the U.S. government has been the most active of UN member governments in pushing for accountability by the Sudanese government, authoring or co-authoring each of the UN resolutions in response to the crisis in Darfur. On the other hand, many peace advocates believe the U.S. government's engagement has not been wholehearted and has waned at key moments. In particular, many observers believe the U.S. government's assertions that the Government of Sudan is providing key intelligence cooperation on the so-called "war on terror" has dampened the U.S. government's willingness to hold the Sudanese government to account for the atrocities in Darfur. On May 29, 2007 President Bush issued targeted economic sanctions against Sudan in an effort to exert more pressure on the Khartoum government. Most peace advocates, however, believe those sanctions are not tough enough.

China's Role

China purchases a significant portion of Sudan's oil and is its largest foreign-investment and trade partner, affording the Chinese government significant potential leverage to pressure the Sudanese government. Unfortunately, China's response to the crisis in Darfur has been ambivalent at best and outright supportive of the Sudanese government at worst. For most of the conflict's history, the Chinese government has threatened to veto any Darfur-related resolutions in the UN Security Council. Beginning in late 2006, however, China publicly has been more critical of the Sudanese government's response to the Darfur crisis, a move many have attributed to China's hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games and its fear of international boycotts. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), China also is reassessing its foreign policy in general and seeking to transition toward greater engagement in transnational issues. With respect to Sudan, the ICG reports that China believes that continued violence in Darfur could, in the long term, disrupt the peace in the south and hurt China's access to oil.

RECENT EPISCOPAL CHURCH ACTIONS ON SUDAN

In the spring of 2004, following a visit from Archbishop Joseph Marona, Primate of Sudan, to the U.S. House of Bishops' meeting, then-Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold devoted his Holy Week message to the Church to the situation in Darfur, calling U.S. Episcopalians to advocacy and prayer for an end to the violence. In June 2004, Bishop Griswold wrote to President Bush urging him to pursue a comprehensive strategy to end what many have called genocide. That same month, the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church adopted a resolution strongly condemning the Sudanese government and its role in Darfur. The Executive Council called upon the United States "to exercise leadership in the international community to provide an immediate humanitarian surge in the delivery of relief assistance to the people of Darfur and to underscore to the Government of Sudan that failure to end the atrocities and allow immediate delivery of relief assistance will be met by swift and immediate action from the international community." In June 2005, the Executive Council passed another resolution endorsing an international peacekeeping force in Darfur, enhanced economic sanctions against the Sudanese governments, and other measures designed to end the crisis. The Episcopal Church is a member of the Save Darfur Coalition, and has worked – through its Office of Government Relations and the Episcopal Public Policy Network – to press for active U.S. government responses to the violence. In August 2007, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori issued a statement to the Episcopal Church drawing attention to the need for continued advocacy from U.S. Episcopalians to ensure that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan does not collapse.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Write letters to your Members of Congress and President Bush urging the U.S. to play a stronger role
- Raise awareness in your parish and community
- Raise funds to help support humanitarian efforts

OTHER RESOURCES

- Episcopal Public Policy Network, <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/eppn>
- www.darfurinfo.org
- www.savedarfur.org
- International Crisis Group <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3060&l=1>
- United Nations High Commission on Refugees
South Sudan <http://www.unhcr.org/southsudan.html>
Darfur <http://www.unhcr.org/chad.html>
- <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/lostboysofsudan/about.html>